

House Resolution 1948

By: Representatives Williams of the 178th, Lane of the 158th, Lane of the 167th, Hatfield of the 177th, Buckner of the 130th, and others

A RESOLUTION

1 Urging the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council not to prohibit bottom fishing in
2 large areas of the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Georgia as a measure to end overfishing of
3 red snapper in the South Atlantic Region; and for other purposes.

4 WHEREAS, the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act was
5 reauthorized by the United States Congress in 2007 with revisions designed to more quickly
6 end overfishing of fish stocks under federal fishery management; and

7 WHEREAS, the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) was created by this
8 act for the purpose of providing fishery management recommendations to the National
9 Marine Fisheries Service; and

10 WHEREAS, the State of Georgia is an active participant in the SAFMC with three voting
11 members; and

12 WHEREAS, the SAFMC is deliberating on Amendment 17A to the Fishery Management
13 Plan for the Snapper Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region with final approval
14 scheduled for June, 2010; and

15 WHEREAS, Amendment 17A contains several measures to end overfishing of red snapper
16 and to establish plans to rebuild the red snapper population of the South Atlantic Region; and

17 WHEREAS, one proposed measure to end overfishing of red snapper is the prohibition of
18 bottom fishing in large expanses of the Atlantic Ocean, including an area off the coast of
19 Georgia approximately 2,100 square miles in size; and

20 WHEREAS, bottom fishing is a commonly used method to catch many saltwater fish
21 species, several of which are not overfished; and

22 WHEREAS, from 2003 to 2008, anglers, fishing guides, and commercial fishermen
23 originating from Georgia ports landed only 8 percent of the red snapper caught in the South
24 Atlantic Region; and

25 WHEREAS, according to Georgia Department of Natural Resources and federal studies of
26 the expenditures of saltwater recreational anglers and commercial fishermen, it is estimated
27 that saltwater fishing has an annual economic impact of a half-billion dollars to the Georgia
28 economy; and

29 WHEREAS, a 2009 National Marine Fisheries Service study estimated that more than 2,000
30 persons are directly employed in saltwater recreational fishing in Georgia; and

31 WHEREAS, a prohibition on bottom fishing in large areas of the Atlantic Ocean off the coast
32 of Georgia may cause economic hardship to coastal counties, including potential job losses
33 at a time when unemployment rates are already high; and

34 WHEREAS, a prohibition of bottom fishing in large areas of the Atlantic Ocean off the coast
35 of Georgia may result in excessive fishing pressure on the remaining open areas, possibly
36 causing localized depletion of other fish species, further seriously impacting fishermen,
37 employment, and the local economy; and

38 WHEREAS, a prohibition of bottom fishing in large areas of the Atlantic Ocean off the coast
39 of Georgia will be very difficult to enforce, adding more responsibilities to state and federal
40 conservation law enforcement agencies already facing staff and funding reductions; and

41 WHEREAS, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources has been an active advocate for
42 a balanced approach to address the issue of red snapper population decline; and

43 WHEREAS, the National Marine Fisheries Service implemented a 180 day prohibition on
44 the harvest of red snapper in the South Atlantic Region beginning January 4, 2010, and can
45 extend this prohibition for an additional 186 days; and

46 WHEREAS, updated, science based information on the status of South Atlantic Region red
47 snapper will be presented to the SAFMC in December, 2010, and may allow that body to
48 identify less severe measures to end overfishing while rebuilding the red snapper population
49 to a more healthy condition.

50 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES that
51 the members of this body strongly urge the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council not
52 to recommend the prohibition of bottom fishing in large areas of the Atlantic Ocean,
53 including an area off the coast of Georgia, as part of Amendment 17A to the Fishery
54 Management Plan for the Snapper Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region.

55 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Clerk of the House of Representatives is authorized
56 and directed to transmit appropriate copies of this resolution to the members of the Board of
57 Natural Resources, the Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources, and to all
58 members of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council.